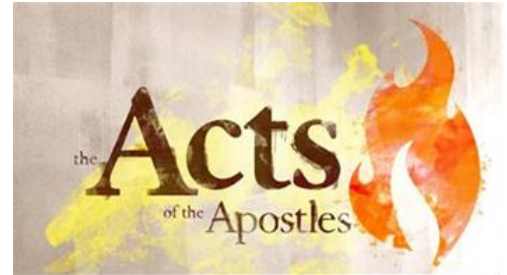


ACTS: THE STORY OF THE DANCING CRIPPLED GUY – Part 4

Acts 3:1-10

The Jesus movement was progressing quickly during the months following Pentecost. Acts 2:42-43 tells us:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”



The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost provided supernatural power to the apostles to perform miraculous works. Why? The easiest answer was to continue the work Jesus began during His ministry of demonstrating the divine power that could bring sight to the blind, heal the terminally ill and heal crippled people. These acts signed that Jesus was indeed God. The supernatural power of the disciples proved the reality of the resurrected Jesus and the reality of the Holy Spirit. As Peter was quick to point out it had nothing to do with him or John, it was entirely the work of God who sent and utilized them.

To say this was a turning point for Israel would be a grand understatement and the first obvious example was the healing of the crippled beggar outside the gates of the Temple.

Healing at the Beautiful Gate

3 One afternoon Peter and John went to the temple for the three o'clock prayer. 2 As they came to the entrance called the Beautiful Gate, they were captured by the sight of a man crippled from birth being carried and placed at the entrance to the temple. He was often brought there to beg for money from those going into worship. 3 When he noticed Peter and John going into the temple, he begged them for money.

4 Peter and John, looking straight into the eyes of the crippled man, said, "Look at us!" 5 Expecting a gift, he readily gave them his attention. 6 Then

Peter said, "I don't have money, but I'll give you this—by the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!"

7–8 Peter held out his right hand to the crippled man. As he pulled the man to his feet, suddenly power surged into his crippled feet and ankles. The man jumped up, stood there for a moment stunned, and then began to walk around! As he went into the temple courts with Peter and John, he leapt for joy and shouted praises to God.

It was three in the afternoon, the ninth hour of the Hebrew day when Peter and John approached the gate leading into the Temple in Jerusalem. A crippled beggar was sitting near the entrance asking for money. He was a lifelong cripple, a professional beggar who was savvy in his location. The Temple entrance had steady traffic and the people would give to beggars. For some it was a spiritual act. For others it was a way to be noticed for their piety by fellow worshippers, and for some a way to impress God. For the cripple beggar it was a way to make a living. His life changed dramatically the afternoon Peter and John came to pray.

He asked Peter and John for money, but Peter stopped and told the man to look at him. Beggars did not make eye contact. They held their gaze down. It was a social custom and a religious requirement. His class was socially low, and his religious standing was zero. He was considered unclean and unworthy to enter the Temple. He would/could contaminate a Jew going into the Temple, making them ceremonially unclean. His condition excluded him from the worshipping community. He was cripple, community-less and had no standing before God.

All of that was in reality proof positive of how low Judaism had fallen at that point. The law, let's say the original intent of the early law, did not exclude innocent persons with disabilities. By what we know of the first century the law disqualified so many people for so many reasons it was an exclusive religion for only the whole and well.

This began to change when Jesus centered His ministry on the excluded. This did not go over well with the religious leaders (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Sanhedrin) and it became worse when he added Samaritans and Gentiles into His sphere.

So, Peter and John were singly doing what Jesus would have done. God's movement was realigning with its original intent. A reformation was afoot. The

real elite would fight against it. Followers of Jesus would suffer and die, but in time the reformation would take hold. That day would be the first page of the first chapter of an entirely new book.

“Sirs, please give me money.” John and Peter said, “we do not have money but what we do have we give you.”

The beggar likely said, “well, uh, I need money.” Peter told him to look up at them. All three made eye contact, which was also against the rules. Was this a sign that he would get a sizable donation and these two men were wanting an audience? That would be a no. Peter took his hand and said, “In the name of Jesus, walk.” “Wait, what”, he may have thought. Peter pulled him up and instantly he was healed from the ground up. His feet and ankles went from useless, shriveled and atrophied, to strong and well. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. He went into the Temple jumping and dancing. He was a new person.

It is of note that his position changed. He was no longer an outsider, a precluded Jew. He was now a part of the worshipping community. He was now a real-life testimony of the reality of Jesus the Messiah.

The people who knew him as the crippled beggar were amazed: “and they were filled with amazement and wonder at what had happened to him.”

Note: they were not filled with the spirit, at least not yet, just amazement. God had their attention. Wonder and amazement often comes before acceptance.

Takeaways:

1. Why him? He was excluded from the faith community and that would no longer be tolerated. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well she would soon worship whenever/wherever she wished and would do so “in spirit and truth.” The saving ability of the law had been replaced by the saving grace of Jesus. No exclusions. Faith would no longer be exclusively for the well, the whole and the healthy.

2. Physical issues would not defile and separate, only sin would, and God dealt with humankind's sin condition through the cross, resurrection and ascension.
Sin indeed separates us from God, but not forever. Spiritual healing is but one request away.
3. So, we are to be agents of inclusion, never exclusion. The day we assume someone/some people are unlovable by God is the day we become like the Sadducees, and that will not be our finest day.

So, love all, as God, Jesus, Peter and John did. That is our calling.

Amen & Amen,

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